



News Release

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Contacts: [Kelly Stowe](#), Communications Office
[Sharon Moysiuk](#), Communications Office

(15-061)
360-236-4022
360-236-4024

State honors best of the best in drinking water

Drinking water pros honored throughout the state May 1-7

OLYMPIA — Washington is known for clean, tasty drinking water. And every year during the first week of May, state health officials honor the hardworking individuals who ensure the water coming out of our faucets is safe.

“The safe drinking water running through the taps of Washington homes is all thanks to the water system operators and others who provide safe, reliable drinking water to millions of Washington homes year after year,” said Clark Halvorson, director of the agency’s Office of Drinking Water.

It takes an incredible amount of knowledge, dedication, and hard work to operate a water system. During National Drinking Water Week, the state Department of Health honors those who accept this demanding job. This year, the agency is presenting eight awards to recognize their efforts, ranging from emergency response to long, stellar careers within the drinking water industry.

This year’s winners who have been nominated by their supervisors, peers, and staff from the agency’s Office of Drinking Water are:

Tacoma Water—“Commitment to Excellence”

The Green River Filtration Facility is celebrating the opening of the new, 168 million gallons per day filtration treatment plant—the largest in our state. When water systems use surface water, such as rivers and lakes, particles in the water must be removed to meet drinking water standards. The \$187 million dollar project serves more than 500,000 customers in Pierce and King counties. The award will be presented at 9:30 a.m. Monday, May 4 during the ribbon-cutting ceremony for the new facility located at 36932 SE Green River Headworks Road, Ravensdale.

Kitsap Public Utility District—“Commitment to Excellence”

Healthy water systems, long-time employees, and happy customers all describe the Kitsap Public Utility District (PUD). The PUD, which owns and operates around 150 water systems, is committed to help struggling systems in Kitsap County. The PUD is a valuable partner for the Department of Health in providing safe and reliable drinking water. The award will be presented at 11 a.m. Thursday, May 7 at the Kitsap PUD office, 1431 Finn Hill Road, Poulsbo.

City of Colville Water System—“Pursuit of Excellence”

The city, recognizing the need to replace a deteriorating water system, formed a committee of city officials and local residents to create a long-term financial plan. The plan, adopted in 2010, included an unpopular rate increase of 4.5 percent for five years. During this time, the city replaced three wells, improved water reservoirs, repaired leaks (saving about two million gallons a year), and replaced old meters and several thousand feet of water mains. The award will be presented at 4 p.m. Wednesday, May 6 at the City of Colville Water Department, 1044 N Lincoln, Colville.

Steve Prather, Water Services, Clark Public Utilities—“Lifetime Achievement”

Steve Prather implemented Clark Public Utilities’ state-of-the-art computer structure that enables high-level monitoring and control of a complex water system. His efforts help operators respond to system concerns from remote facilities, which improves response times, minimizes damage and water loss, and improves service to customers. His award will be presented at 2:30 p.m. Tuesday, May 5 at the Water Services Operations Center at 8600 NE 117th Ave., Vancouver.

John Wesely, Cedar Water Treatment Facility—“Above and Beyond”

As plant and project manager at the Cedar Water Treatment Facility, John Wesely and his eight-member staff oversee a 180 million gallons per day plant for Seattle Public Utilities. Wesely, a CH2M Hill employee, had double-duty being a manager and shift operator for several months. His nomination cites his ability to “keep the greater Seattle area water taps running full and clean.” His award will be presented at 3 p.m. May 5 at the Seattle Municipal Tower, Room 4901, 700 5th Avenue, Seattle.

Cheryl Capron, Seattle Public Utilities—“Operator of the Year”

In her nomination, Capron was described as a “working example of ‘Operator of the Year’ every year!” Her accomplishments include an analysis of the Seattle Public Utilities distribution system

that identified fire-flow and low-pressure deficiencies and recommendations for improvements. Her award will be presented at 7 p.m. Friday, May 1 at the Bellevue Hyatt Regency during the local American Water Works Association conference. The Bellevue Hyatt Regency is located at 900 Bellevue Way NE.

Phil Gady and Melissa Young—“Going Above and Beyond”

When windstorms result in power outages, it can put water systems at risk. Last summer, systems in northern Spokane County were hard hit. At the same time, Department of Health Drinking Water staff was focused on the North Central Cascades wildfires. Phil Gady and Melissa Young, both certified water system operators, quickly assessed damage, mitigated threats, and restored service to affected systems. They also became the eyes and ears for the agency, helping prioritize response and recovery assistance. Their awards will be presented at 11 a.m. May 6 at the Office of Drinking Water’s Eastern Regional Office, 16201 East Indiana Avenue, Spokane Valley.

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